Examples of Quoting from a Text MLA Style

Introducing a Quotation

Hawthorne writes, “The scarlet letter burned on Hester Prynne’s bosom” (111).

“The scarlet letter,” Hawthorne states, “burned on Hester Prynne’s bosom” (111).

“The scarlet letter burned on Hester Prynne’s bosom,” Hawthorne explains (111).

Hawthorne illustrates this about her personality by showing that the “scarlet letter burned on Hester’s Prynne’s bosom” (111).

Notes:

* The last example is the hardest and most complex way to introduce a quotation—it shows a real mastery of language on the part of the writer. Master it!
* Variety, like in most things, is the key to being a successful writer; therefore, you should often use different approaches to introducing your quote so as not to bore the reader with a monotonous style.

Citing a Quotation with Dialogue

Pearl continually asks her mother, “’[W]hy does she keep her hand over her heart?’” (116).

“’[T]his brook is the boundary between two worlds,’” Dimmesdale observes in the forest (133).

Note:

* Notice that I capitalized the first letter of the first word in each passage. The brackets around a letter or a word tell my reader that the letter or word is mine and not Hawthorne’s.

Keep Exclamation Points and Question Marks

Hawthorne’s use of syntax to show Chillingworth’s true character is evident when he writes, “But what distinguished the physician’s ecstacy from Satan’s was the trait of wonder in it!” (92).

See example above for question mark citation.

Note:

* This is done because the exclamation point and the quotation mark change the meaning of what is being quoted.